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SPACE CENTER Roundup

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JSC historian's award-winning book recalls Apollo era

NASA Johnson Space Center Historian Glen Swanson has been awarded the George H. Pendleton Prize by the Society for History in the Federal Government for his book “‘Before This Decade Is Out’: Personal Reflections on the Apollo Program” (NASA: NASA History Office).

The book is a collection of oral histories that were gathered primarily from the JSC Oral History Project, which is devoted to preserving the words and remembrances of key participants in NASA’s human space program. It includes reminiscences from the perspective of many of the key political leaders, engineers, scientists, and astronauts who made the Apollo Program such a resounding success.

“This award is really an acknowledgment of those individuals whose stories are laid out in these pages and told in their own words,” Swanson says.

Shortly after Swanson arrived at JSC in August 1998 to work on the JSC Oral History Project, he was approached with the idea of assembling a book that would be a collection of oral histories that focused on the Apollo Program. With the onset of the 30th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission, he knew that the Apollo Program would soon draw a lot of renewed attention.

Swanson read and edited thousands of pages of transcripts to try and capture the essence of the Apollo Program from an engineering/management perspective. He also went back and gathered oral histories from other programs at JSC and additional NASA centers.

“One of the challenges for me as editor was to translate any technical language in the transcripts into easily understandable prose,” said Swanson. “Many of these



Glen Swanson

folks come from an engineering background and speak a language all of their own. To help the reader through the language, I added footnotes to explain referenced dates, acronyms and terms most

people may not be familiar with. I also removed awkward pauses and other common utterances present in the spoken word which do not translate well into readable prose. The end result is a book that I

believe is very easy to read and understand. Many times publications of this subject matter are very technical, but this book reads like a good story with each chapter slightly different from the rest because each has its own storyteller.”

The book contains brief biographical introductions followed by interviews of people who worked on the Apollo Program at JSC (then the Manned Spacecraft Center) as well as at other NASA centers including the Stennis Space Center and NASA Headquarters. It includes oral recollections from James Webb, who served as the NASA administrator during the early days of the manned space program through Apollo; Wernher von Braun, rocket pioneer and architect of the Saturn V; Robert Gilruth, director of the Manned Spacecraft Center; and Apollo astronauts Harrison Schmitt and Charles Duke.

According to Swanson, a highlight of the book has proven to be the chapter on Geneva Barnes, a relative unknown in the Apollo story whose career with NASA included a brief stint as a public affairs assistant to Neil Armstrong. She worked in the Public Affairs Office at NASA Headquarters when the Apollo 11 astronauts returned from the first landing on the Moon. She accompanied the crew on a worldwide tour of 22 countries in 38 days, a unique experience she recounts in her chapter.

Swanson also selected all of the photographs included in the book. He went through JSC’s photo archives, searching for images that had not been published before that would convey a personal side of the individuals featured in each chapter.

Please see **SWANSON**, Page 7

Astronaut remembered...

Tree-planting ceremony scheduled for Astronaut Conrad

On June 2, JSC will celebrate the life of Astronaut Charles P. (Pete) Conrad, the third person to walk on the Moon, by planting a Live Oak tree in his honor, ensuring that his legendary role as a space explorer will never be forgotten.

JSC civil service and contractor employees are invited to attend the ceremony, which begins at 11 a.m. adjacent to Bldg. 111. Employees are encouraged to ride the JSC shuttle bus (route A) to the site as there is no nearby parking.

Center Director George W.S. Abbey and former Deputy Center Director P.J. Weitz will begin the ceremony, followed by the ceremonial tree planting and a moment of silence. A T-38 flyover will complete the program.

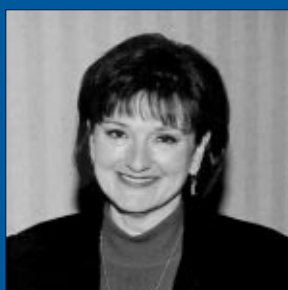


Conrad’s family, astronaut alumni and crewmembers also will be in attendance.

Conrad left his mark on history November 19, 1969, when, as commander of the Apollo 12 mission, he and Astronaut Alan Bean set their lunar module “Intrepid” down on the Moon’s Ocean of Storms to achieve the second of six landings in the Apollo Program. Hours later, Conrad crept safely out of the vehicle and onto the Moon’s surface. Parodying the historic words of Neil Armstrong four months earlier, Conrad said, “Whoopie! Man, that may have been a small one for Neil but that’s a long one for me.”

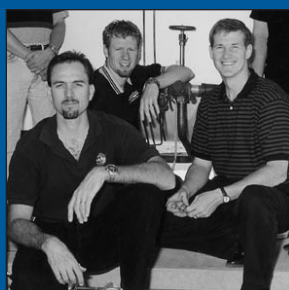
Conrad also flew on two Gemini missions, Gemini 5 and 11, and commanded the first crew to live and work on America’s first space station, Skylab.

Conrad died July 8, 1999, at age 69. ■



Procurement
Supervisor of the
Year named.

Page 2



Expertise applied
to real-life
problems.

Page 4



Co-ops complete
spring semester
work tours.

Page 5